

Application No. 10/708,500
Amendment dated September 20, 2005
Reply to Office Action of June 21, 2005

REMARKS

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner, Dennis H. Pedder, for the telephone interview with Applicants' representative, David W. Dorton, on August 2, 2005. During the interview, claims 1, 4 and 11 were discussed in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,952,630 to Filion et al. Applicants' representative noted that reference numeral 18 in Filion '630 was indicated to refer to an outer surface of an armrest described therein, and that reference numeral 22 was indicated to refer to a substrate of the armrest.

Claims 1-14 remain pending in the Application and claims 1-11 stand rejected. Claims 12-14 are withdrawn in view of a restriction requirement. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections of claims 1-11, for the reasons set forth below, and respectfully request reconsideration in view of the following remarks.

Rejection of Claim 7

As an initial matter, Applicants note that the Office Action Summary indicates that claim 7 is rejected, however, no rejection of claim 7 is set forth in the Detailed Action. Nevertheless, Applicants believe claim 7 is in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth below for independent claim 1.

Claims Rejected Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 4-6, 8, 9 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,952,630 to Filion et al. Claims 1 and 11 are the

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only independent claims of this rejected group. Claim 1 is directed to an automotive interior trim component, comprising:

a substrate member forming at least part of a structural support for the trim component, said substrate member having a first side and a second side, and having at least one target area for providing a soft feel to the trim component, said substrate member having a first thickness outside said target area to provide rigidity to said substrate member, and a second thickness within said target area that is reduced relative to said first thickness such that said substrate is pliable in said target area

(emphasis added). Claim 11 is directed to an armrest and includes a substrate member as recited in claim 1.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections of claims 1 and 11 because Filion '630 does not teach or suggest each and every element recited in these claims. Specifically, Filion '630 does not teach a substrate member that forms at least a part of structural support for a trim component, the substrate having a first thickness outside a target area for providing rigidity to the substrate, and a second thickness within the target area that is reduced relative to the first thickness. Rather, Filion '630 is directed to an armrest formed as a composite 15 having a substrate 22, 22a, 22b to which a foam layer 24 and a flexible skin 26 are bonded. (See Filion '630 at col. 3, lines 60-64.)

Applicants note that reference numeral 18 referred to in the Office Action is not a "substrate" that forms part of the structural support for the armrest of Filion '630, but is an outer surface that is described in Filion '630 to include a "flexible skin 26" to which a transparent protective coating 43 may be applied. (See, e.g., Filion '630 at col. 3, lines 60-62, FIG. 2; col. 5, lines 51-61, FIG. 5; and col. 6, lines 11-12.) This

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flexible skin 26 does not form part of a structural support for the armrest and, as a result of its flexible quality, does not have a first thickness that provides rigidity to the skin.

Instead, Fillion '630 refers to reference numeral 22 as the "substrate" and describes that such a substrate "is employed on the backside of the foam to support the foam and the outer cover and for mounting the soft interior trim panel in a vehicle." (See Fillion '630

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